

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Teachers' Perceptions of Mastery Learning

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The concept of mastery learning was formally identified and explained by Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues in 1968. Since that time, there have been strong supporters (Guskey, 2010; Hunter, 1982; Meece et al., 2006) and critics (Anderson & Burns, 1987; Arlin & Webster, 1983; Slavin, 1987, 1989) of this strategy and the educational philosophies that support mastery learning. Several researchers have studied the relationship between mastery learning and the academic performance of students, and strong evidence exists to suggest that the application of mastery learning in the classroom not only increases academic performance but may also positively impact students' levels of motivation and their perceptions of school (Adeyemo & Babajide, 2014; Guskey & Anderman, 2013; Johnson et al., 2017; Madjar & Chohat, 2017). The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions of mastery learning. My study first sought to determine if there was a significant difference between teachers' reports of students' academic motivation levels based on whether the students received instruction using mastery learning strategies. My study also aimed to determine how effective teachers perceived mastery learning to be in improving academic achievement for students and to better understand any relationships that may exist between demographic variables and teachers' perceptions of mastery learning's influence.

The theory that provided the framework for this study was goal orientation theory, and research has supported the notion that children's experiences in the school environment were associated with the type of goal orientations they adopted, and these orientations changed their views of school and the tasks associated with the educational environment (Dweck, 1986; Kaplan & Maehr, 2007). This was primarily a quantitative study, and descriptive and inferential statistical analyses techniques were employed. Descriptive statistics were used to display the degree to which mastery learning was implemented, teachers' genders, years of experience, levels of training, content areas, grade levels, and teachers' perceptions of mastery learning's effectiveness per the researcher-designed Likert-type scale survey. In addition to the quantitative responses, qualitative responses were also collected from participants on an open-ended survey item, and responses were analyzed using evaluation coding techniques (Miles et al., 2020). This study supports the notion that mastery learning has a positive influence on student behaviors and outcomes related to academic motivation and academic achievement, and the findings in this study may serve to support educational leaders looking to encourage the implementation of mastery learning in the schools they lead.

Keywords: mastery learning, formative assessments, teachers' perceptions, academic achievement, academic motivation, goal orientation theory